

Proposal for Ice Hockey Game and Various Events in Belfast (and Dublin) October 2011

Preliminary Proposal

Background:

In 2009, the University of Massachusetts Lowell created a Center for Irish Partnerships, "to work with Irish partners to create a dynamic model for Cross-Atlantic collaboration that will promote and advance UMass Lowell's goals to enhance the student experience by providing a global perspective to teaching and research, while contributing to Irish interests through exchange and service."

Since its inception, the Center and the University community have signed a "Framework for Institutional Collaboration" with Queen's University Belfast, hosted an Irish-American Emerging Technologies Conference at the Lowell campus, sent U Mass Lowell students to study in Ireland, laid the groundwork for a multi-year social archeology project studying pre-famine and post-famine life in Ireland and in Lowell, and begun a three country collaboration on "reflective practice" in teaching with Ireland and Israel.

Collaboration through Sports:

In the decades long effort to bridge the divide in Northern Ireland, popular sport has often been cited as a vehicle for cross-community reconciliation and growth. Ice Hockey, previously not well known as a participatory and spectator sport in Northern Ireland was introduced in the 1990s with the visionary hope that it might provide such a cross-community activity. The Belfast Giants were thus born in 2000. The Giants play at the Odyssey Arena in Belfast against teams from Scotland and England.

U Mass Lowell Hockey:

The University of Massachusetts Lowell has competed in intercollegiate men's Ice Hockey since 1972 and in NCAA Division I (the highest level in the U.S.) since 1982. The U Mass Lowell River Hawks play in Hockey East, most often cited as America's most competitive conference. The Ice Hockey season runs from October through March.

U Mass Lowell Exhibition in Belfast:

It has been proposed that U Mass Lowell play a regular season game against Northeastern University, another Hockey East, U.S. college Division I Ice Hockey team in Belfast in October 2011. Northeastern has a collaborative relationship with University of Ulster. Coupled with U Mass Lowell's relationship with Queen's, the opportunity for a four University event is exciting and unique. While the game itself would be an attraction, it would be accompanied by other events such as a golf tournament, social gatherings and alumni events. Supporters of U Mass Lowell and Northeastern would be invited as a package tour. Television broadcast of the game from Belfast to the Boston area would elevate the profile of the events. The benefits of such a package of events would inure not only to those who attend, but to U Mass Lowell, Queen's, Northeastern, UU, the City Belfast, Northern Ireland and the sport of Ice Hockey.

Emerging Technology Conference:

In October of 2009, U Mass Lowell, partnering with Queen's and Dublin City University held an "US/Ireland Emerging Technology Conference" at Lowell. Faculty of the three Universities presented the latest research to fellow academics and business people from the New England area. The Conference was a great success and it was decided to hold a similar conference in Ireland. The planners recognizing the potential synergy that could result from a multi-activity week in Ireland, and with the encouragement of Trevor Newsom at Queen's and Brian McCraith at DCU, the plan developed to hold the conference in both Dublin and Belfast around the dates for the Ice Hockey weekend. So, on Friday, October 7, the conference would open at Dublin City University. Day two of the Conference would be at Queen's on Monday, October 10th. Conference participants could attend either or both days of the conference, with the other activities described above in between.